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PRESENT AND FUTURE OF NEW REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY IN THE EDUCATION SCHOOL'S SYSTEM AND SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE'S POSITION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

Dejan Šabić*¹, Rajko Golić*, Snežana Vujadinović*, Marko Joksimović*

* University of Belgrade - Faculty of Geography, Studentski trg 3/III, Belgrade

Abstract: The classical division of space into regions has been retained in textbooks for primary and secondary schools, as well as for the universities. Regional scholars from the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography follow world geography, as well as develop a critical opinion on the role of the regions (formal and functional regions), regional geography as spatial science, regional development, regional identity, and research problematic issues related to the regions. Teaching regional geography students recognize spatial problems that burden the regions, as well as acquire education and knowledge transfer skills in new situations, develop critical thinking etc. In order to achieve this, regional geography curriculum are quantitatively and qualitatively transformed and summarized, thereby replacing the extensive factual material with a problematic approach to the study of the region. The aim of article is to determine the role of regional scholars from the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography in modern geographic research, as well as to improve the position of new regional geography, whose task is to inform the scientific and professional public with the pluralistic nature of the world and contemporary trends that link the global level and levels of regional and local communities. Scientific and practical affirmation of the region takes place from a local to a global level, as a result of the new regional development paradigm, based on the knowledge and the changes in the economy, technology, and policies emerged in the last thirty years.

Keywords: contemporary regional geography, regional scholars, spatial problems, education and knowledge transfer..

¹ Corresponding author: D. Šabić, University of Belgrade - Faculty of Geography, Studentski trg 3/III, Belgrade; e-mail: dejansabic@yahoo.com

Introduction

Ancient time's people tried to determine where are the boundaries of their territory with the goal to systemize knowledge about the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the structural elements of the space, as well as to use the available natural and human resources for a better life and greater production of material goods. Therefore, approach of structural elements of the space is a old research process. Modern world's geographers, demographers, economists, political scientists, spatial planners, culturologists, and sociologists are involved to research the regions and regional development, as results of scientific and technological revolution, diffusion of innovations, as well as, the accelerated growth of the world population, increasing consumption of goods, and deepening Imbalances between the regions in the division of world wealth. The division of space into regions, according to Wishart (2004), has a vast literature in geography: there are natural regions, nodal regions, involving circulation around a focal point, vernacular regions, which exist in peoples' minds as regional consciousness, and which may or may not coincide with regions recognized by geographers as they practice regionalization; administrative regions with fixed dimensions that mark the jurisdiction of, for example, political authority; and composite regions, which are the product of interactions among inhabitants, social institutions, and a physical (nonhuman) environment over the time. Developed societies increasingly feel that they cannot hide themselves behind the welfare wall and neglect the problems of the global community and world's undeveloped regions. As a result, regional scholars are involved in solving global and regional problems, as well as, they try to change the development policies of their countries.

The classical division of space into regions has been retained in textbooks for primary and secondary schools, as well as for the universities (eg. natural regions or physiographic divisions consists of physiographic provinces - regions, which in turn consist of physiographic sections or sub-regions, political territorial/state's divisions (administrative regions), interactions among inhabitants (composite regions), and some peoples' minds (vernacular regions). Processes of urban development have attracted considerable attention from regional scholars. If progress already has been made towards an understanding of the processes of agglomeration and accumulation that underpin regional growth (Scott, 2001-a, 2001-b), researchers have also examined the corresponding structures of collective provision and welfare that sustain social reproduction within regions (Jonas and Moio, 2016; Jonas and Ward, 2007; Etherington and Jones, 2009).

The aim of our study is to determine the role of regional scholars in modern geographic research, as well as to improve the position of new regional geography, whose task is to inform the scientific and professional public with the plu-

realistic nature of the world and contemporary trends that link the global level and levels of regional and local communities. Scientific and practical affirmation of the region takes place from a local to a global level, as a result of the new regional development paradigm, based on the knowledge and the changes in the economy, technology, and policies emerged in the last thirty years.

Unlike the traditional concept of the region, which is a reflection of adaptation to the natural environment, the new concept defines the region as a result of regional social processes between individuals, groups and institutions. This process creates an internal homogenized space and determines its identity.

Regional scholars within the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography (UBFG) are taken as case studies in this article. First, the theoretical background of regional researching is reviewed. Later, the patterns of regional researching are discussed and the methodology used in this paper is introduced. The phases of evolution of regional researching at the UBFG are unpacked to show the role of regional scholars in modern geographic researches. This is followed by empirical evidence used to evaluate the dynamics and patterns of their researching at the UBFG. Finally, some concluding remarks are provided.

In the article we answer the following questions: 1) What is the role of regional geographers from the UBFG in geographic researching in recent years?; 2) What is the share of regional geographers in the total number of article published in international journals, compared to other researchers of the UBFG? and 3) What knowledge and skills have modern regional geographers?

Position of regional geography in the system of geosciences

According to Murphy and O'Loughlin (2009) regional geography for a long time had an encyclopedic cast, with an emphasis on cataloging major physical, economic, demographic, and social characteristics of different parts of the world. They have confirmed that many studies too often failed to provide much analysis of how geographic arrangements shaped political and social developments, nor did they offer concepts and ideas that could advance more general understandings of how geography reflects and shapes the changing character of the planet. That is the reason, according to Murphy and O'Loughlin (2009), why many geographers turned their attention away from regional geography and instead focused on systematic studies concerned with the role of individual geographic phenomena in human affairs.

Regional scholars from the UBFG follow world geography, as well as develop a critical opinion on the role of the regions (formal and functional regions), regional geography as spatial science, regional development, regional identity,

and research problematic issues related to the regions. Teaching regional geography students recognize spatial problems that burden the regions, as well as acquire education and knowledge transfer skills in new situations, develop critical thinking etc. In order to achieve this, regional geography curriculum are quantitatively and qualitatively transformed and summarized, thereby replacing the extensive factual material with a problematic approach to the study of the region.

In the past, geographers have often approached the region from divergent ontological and epistemological perspectives (Agnew et al., 1996). For example, there was the long-standing debate about the merits of studying, respectively, formal and functional regions. That debate served to highlight some of the key philosophical and epistemological differences between traditional regional geography and its positivist spatial science (Johnston and Sidaway, 2004). According to Jonas (2012) recent encounters between realist geographers and poststructuralists continue this tradition of discussion for all the age-old distinction between formal and functional regions. In conveying the sense that the territorial and relational approaches represent two opposing extremes along a spectrum of approaches to place and region, differences in ontology and epistemology can be clarified (Jessop et al., 2008; Jonas, 2012).

According to Belgrade's School of geography, a new regional geographic research represents theoretical or empirical examination of the regional problem, according to certain methodological rules, the purpose of which is to provide a reliable and precise answer. Due a lot new regional geographic research, more classification of regional research has been created: theoretical and empirical (according to the research goal), fundamentally and applied (according to the research objective) and focused on the hypothesis check (according to function). Any scientific research, therefore, and regional, is, in fact, standardized problem solving, which has more mutually logically connected phases.

Methods and data

In this article we used methods of geography, which combine methods of scientific research with the methods of communicating the achieved results. These two standpoints determined the methodology in our research, in defining and communicating results. The complexity of the subject matter required the application of scientific methods suitable for setting up hypotheses, proving attitudes, as well as verifying and forming conclusions.

In this article the study is limited to the UBFG, which include five institutes: Institute of Geography, Institute of Spatial Planning, Institute of Tourism, Institute of Demography, and Institute of Environment and GIS. Institute of Geography

includes five departments: Department of Physical Geography, Department of Social Geography, Department of Regional Geography, Department of Cartography, and Department of Didactics and Methodology of Teaching Geography. Institute of Spatial Planning include only one Department of Spatial Planning, Institute of Tourism includes Department of Tourism, Institute of Demography include Department of Demography, and Institute of Department of Environment consists of two departments: Department of Environment and Department of GIS.

The main geographical institution in Serbia was selected due to its high quality information base, availability of documentary material sources, and statistical data. By comparing and interpreting the data, we have tried to point out the importance of regional scholars in scientific research at the UBFG. The ideas and assumptions were presented by statistical method. The data used was obtained from primary sources: Consortium of Serbian libraries - Kobson or international journals, documentary material UBFG and from authorized statistical websites.

During the research we used geographical literature from domestic and international journals of recent date, which refers to the issue of regional development (Agnew, Livingstone and Rogers, 1996; Brenner, 2002; Castells, 2000; Dierwechter, 2008; Hall and Pain, 2006; Herrschel and Newman, 2002; Harrison and Hoyler 2015; Jessop, Brenner and Jones, 2008; Johnston and Sidaway, 2004; Jonas, 2012; Jonas and Moisis, 2016; Jonas and Ward, 2007; Kantor, Lefevre, Saito, Savitch and Thornley, 2012; Murphy and O'Loughlin, 2009; Etherington and Jones, 2009; Rodriguez-Pose, 2008; Scott, 2001-a, 2001-b; Storper, 2013; Wishart, 2004, etc). In order to show the role of regional geographers in contemporary researching at the UBFG, we used their articles published in international journals in the last seven years (Šabić et al., 2017; Potić, Golić and Joksimović, 2016; Jovanović-Popović et al., 2015; Joksimović et al., 2014; Šabić et al., 2013-a; Šabić, Miljković, Vujadinović, Milinčić and Gajić, 2013-b; Vujadinović et al., 2013-b; Milinčić et al., 2013; Belić, Radosavljević, Milinčić and Šabić, 2012; Šabić et al., 2012; Stanković et al., 2012; Djurdjić, Stojković and Šabić, 2011).

Results and discussion

Regional geographer or universal geographer?

The complexity of regional geography requires regional scholars to know the physical-geographical and sociogeographical disciplines, as well as they have to possess a general culture and be informed. Thanks to their knowledge, as well as their skills, regional scholar recognizes the worlds' differences, as well as global processes that affect various regions.

Regional geography within the subject of geography in the education system of Serbia is taught in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades of primary school. In the sixth grade, Europe is studied, non-European continents are taught in the seventh grade, and in the eighth, children study Geography of Serbia. If we analyze the market for geography textbooks for elementary schools in Serbia, we can see that regional geographers participate as textbook authors with 20%. However, if we look the position of their textbooks on the Serbian textbooks market, we come to interesting data. Their elementary school textbooks cover about 60% of the Serbian textbooks market. This means that 60% of children in Serbia learns geography in elementary school from textbooks written by regional geographers. The reasons for this are, first and foremost, the business policies of publishing houses that have been engaged regional geographers for writing textbooks. Another important reason is the way of writing, i.e. easy writing of regional geographers. General education and knowledge of geography, as well as longlife learning of geography through foreign literature have led to the fact that the textbooks of geography for elementary schools that wrote the regional geographers are the best-selling in Serbia. Based on these facts, we come to the conclusion that regional geography in the education system of Serbia has an important role and that it is primarily due to regional geographers.

The regional geographers have to be, above all, a universal geographer ready to recognize local, regional and global social, economic, cultural, and political phenomena, as well as a visionary scientist whose intuition can direct explore trends and tendencies of certain phenomena. According to Murphy and O'Loughlin (2009), scholars must have a scientific breadth, that is, they have to deal with the largest world regions, no matter how hard it is difficult to define and as much as they have been challenged.

Belgrade's regional geographers' contemporary scientific researching

Modern regional research is a systematic, planned and objective examination of a regional problem with the purpose to provide a precise answer to the pre-established questions. Each regional research has more logically connected phases. A precise definition of the research problem is required first in the focus of research.

There are several ways in which a regional scholar encounters a scientific problem: by exploring regional problems in the physical space, by noting the contradictory results of space researching a phenomenon or process and by noticing the gaps in knowledge. One way to concretize the regional problem is to define the research's goal. An important step of regional research is to set the hypothesis. Namely, a regional scholar prior to research, offers a trial explanation of the problem and provides a response to the hypothesis. He relies on the re-

sults of previous research, on theoretical knowledge, logic, general culture, and skills. In the next step, a regional geographer should define a method of research that will correspond to the set research goal which it will check the hypotheses. The final result is an article or monograph, as well as presented in a transparent, comprehensive, concise and precise manner.

According to the number of international journals' articles, UBFG' regional scholars are leading scientists in the institution. UBFG' regional scholars have 60 articles (July 10th 2017), which is 10 articles per researcher. The total number of UBFG' articles is 288, which is on average 4.43 articles per researcher. At the level of the Institute of Geography, there are 174 articles in total, and the average is 5.44 articles per researcher. Department of Regional Geography has number of articles such as Institute of Demography, Institute for Tourism, Institute for Spatial Planning, Department of GIS, and Department of Didactics and Methodology of Teaching Geography together.

Table 1. *Number of international journals' articles at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography (July 10th 2017)*

Institute	Department	Number of articles	Number of researchers	Articles per researcher
Institute of Geography		174	32	5.44
	Department of Physical Geography	77	13	5.92
	Department of Social Geography	16	7	2.28
	Department of Regional Geography	60	6	10
	Department of Cartography	9	3	3
	Department of Methodology ¹	12	3	4
Institute of Spatial Planing		26	13	2
	Department of Spatial Planing	26	13	2
Institute of Tourism		11	3	3.67
	Department of Tourism	11	3	3.67
Institute of Demography		21	8	2.63
	Department of Demography	21	8	2.63
Institute of Environment and GIS		56	9	6.22
	Department of Environment	50	7	7.14
	Department of GIS	6	2	3
Total		288	65	4.43

¹ Department of Didactics and Methodology of Teaching Geography

Sources: <http://www.gef.bg.ac.rs/en/about-us>, <http://kobson.nb.rs>

Some UBFG' geographers, the so-called UBFG' specialists, who do not know for the scientific turning point of regional geography, as well as for the direction of new regional geography, consider regional geography articles as social or physical geographic (classical dualism in geography). In contrast, regional scholars point out that the synergy of knowledge of social and physical geography possessed by regional scholars about a particular region provides the quality of his scientific work related to the region. In favor is the fact that precisely regional scholars have incomparably more regional articles than so-called geographer – specialist whose narrow research area is eg. local self-governments (Vujadinović and Šabić, 2016), urban development (Joksimović et al., 2014), transformation of landscape (Šabić et al., 2013-b), social problems (Šabić et al., 2013-a; Jovanović-Popović et al., 2014), multiculturalism (Golić, Vujadinović and Šabić, 2016), tourism (Joksimović et al., 2014; Vujadinović et al., 2013-a) regional conflicts (Jovanović-Popović et al., 2015), transition economy (Šabić et al., 2012; Šabić et al., 2017) etc. Regional geographers explain that multidisciplinary and the colorfulness of topics are the result of fact that their knowledge has a depth, and the scientific field is wide, as well as making it easier for regional scholars to deal with various regional problems, regardless of the geographic border discipline in question.

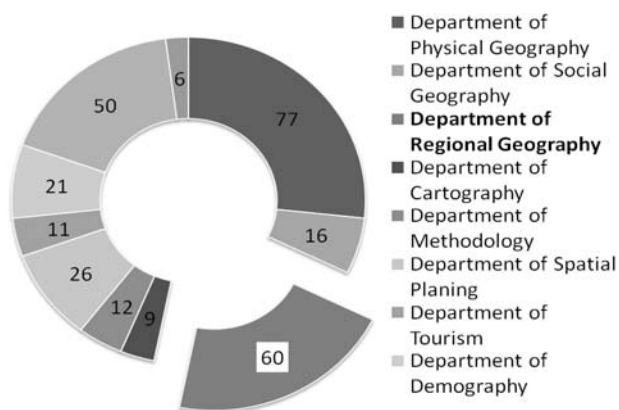


Figure 1. Number of international journals' articles at the Departments of the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography (July 10th 2017)

In addition to border issues, the basic fields of research of UBFG' regional scholars remain in the narrow sense of social and cultural construction of the region, as well as individual and collective identities, and the process of building a region. As such, the UBFG' contemporary regional geography is not reduced in the narrow sense to the accumulation of knowledge related to a certain region, but it studies the formation of regions, as well as the problems related to the region as a theoretical and concrete material category, regionalization, regional identity, and regional development.

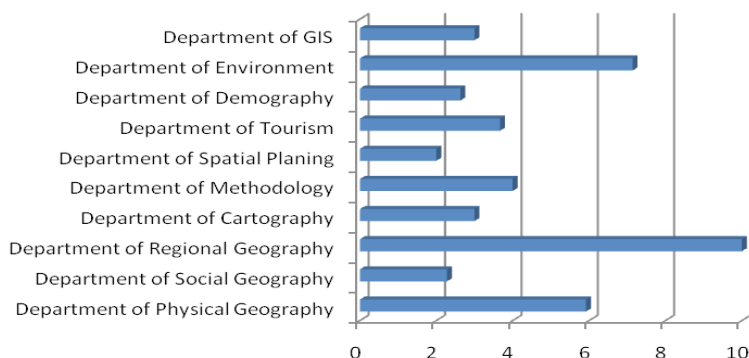


Figure 2. *Number of international journals' articles per researcher at the Departments of the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography (July 10th 2017)*

According to Castells (2000) the process of regional development captures the idea that today's mega-urban agglomerations are comprised of multiple employment nodes, which are inter-connected regionally through extended labor markets or infrastructures, as well as globally through networks and flows of knowledge, information, and capital. The tasks of contemporary regional geography are related in the narrow sense for understanding, as well as explaining the differences in the number, composition and distribution of structural elements of the region and their quantitative and qualitative characteristics, as well as for interpreting the dynamic components and determinants of regional development.

Natural conditions and resources are the basis of the development of the region. The regions are characterized by unequal natural conditions and distribution of natural resources, that is, as well as the production of agricultural products, ores and fuels. Pressure on natural resources is increasing, and disproportion on the scale of the growing population on the one hand and the declining availability of natural resources on the other is obvious.

Economic activity is one of the causes of the disappearance of forests and arable land, the spread of deserts, inappropriate use and pollution of water and air. Natural systems are undermined, and they are expected to support the economic prosperity of the current seven billion people, and the prospectively and significantly larger population, especially developing countries.

Regional social capital plays an important role in the development of the region, with each community having a different developmental social capacity, which implies the level of ability of population mobilization and the direction of development. Regional social capital implies specificity of social organization,

trust, quality and frequency of interactions, cooperation and common interest, as well as recognizable identity. Different associations represent the interests of members of the community, and within them, social capital can be built within the institution through education and information. Regional social capital can initiate positive social changes in the region, as well as may be confined to inherited and newly created conflicts and poor integration of the population. Often, the development of regional social capital is limited by the authorities for the purpose of representing regional interests. In order to do this, it is necessary for regional subjects to inform the population about the activities and motivate them to use the right and actively participate in public life.

Conclusion

In the article we gave answers for the following questions: what is the role of regional geographers from the UBFG in geographic researching in recent years, as well as what is the share of regional geographers in the total number of article published in international journals, compared to other researchers of the UBFG and what knowledge and skills should the contemporary regional scholars have? The main problems of research of UBFG 'regional scholars remain the organization of geographical space, regional development and regional identity, as a reflection of complex relations on the relation between nature and society. Some regional scholars' attention is now turning to the political construction of city regionalism in different national contexts (Jonas and Moisiso, 2016; Dierwechter, 2008; Hall and Pain, 2006; Herrschel and Newman, 2002; Rodríguez-Pose, 2008; Kantor et al., 2012). In so doing, regional scholars have exposed the hand of the national state in shaping new city-regional configurations of political authority and public administration (Brenner, 2002; Harrison, 2007; Harrison and Hoyler, 2015). As Jonas and Moisiso (2016) wrote that city regions also develop in part as a result of politics. They are shaped by national policies in different ways, and in turn, they enter into national political and social life in a variety of ways that are often not apparent to the naked eye (Storper, 2013).

The global age affirms contemporary regional geography due to its synthetic and multidisciplinary character, as confirmed by numerous works in which regional geographers have a leading place. What has not changed in regional geography to date is that regional geographers explore all spatial scales - local, and regional. The challenge for contemporary regional geographers is to analyze the integration processes that give the region a dimension of identity and uniqueness.

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